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SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Letter dated 26 July 1995 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Albania to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the attached text constitutes the official response of the Government of Albania to the Memorandum from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) on the status of the members of the Yugoslav national minorities in the Republic of Albania, also contained in Economic and Social Council document E/1995/88.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and the annexed text circulated as an official document of the Economic and Social Council under the item entitled "Social, humanitarian and human rights questions: reports of subsidiary bodies, conferences and related questions: human rights questions".

(Signed) Andi GJONEJ
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex

OFFICIAL RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF ALBANIA TO THE MEMORANDUM FROM THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA (SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO) ON THE STATUS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE YUGOSLAV NATIONAL MINORITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

The Government of the Republic of Albania considers the contents of the "Memorandum on the status of the members of the Yugoslav national minorities in the Republic of Albania", circulated by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), and which appeared in Economic and Social Council document E/1995/88, to be false, absurd, and dangerous. Firstly, it constitutes a desperate effort by Belgrade to distract public opinion and international organizations from the serious problems which currently concern the Balkans and Europe as a whole. Secondly, it is an attempt to further extend the chauvinistic demands of the Serbs. The policy that "attack is the best form of defence", which has been applied yet again in this case, is by now too well-used to pass unnoticed.

In circumstances in which the Belgrade Government is widely recognized as the champion of double standards, and the situation of Albanians living on their own lands in Kosovo is increasingly grave and alarming as a result of the Serbs' repressive and truly genocidal activities, the entire content of the Serbian memorandum is simply ridiculous.

At a time when there can be little doubt as to the nationalistic and aggressive nature of Serbian policy, it would be inappropriate to spend very much time on repeated, absurd scenarios. The Albanian Government, however, wishing to provide the necessary information to the international bodies to which the aforementioned memorandum has been presented, and to reaffirm the importance it attaches to strict respect for the international standards and principles regarding human rights and the rights of national minorities, considers that it is reasonable to present the following explanations:

(a) The term "Yugoslav national minorities", which appears in the memorandum from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), is not legally recognized;

(b) According to the latest census, dated 1989, which is the only official source, the number of people declared to be of Serbian and Montenegrin nationality is extremely small (as the memorandum is forced to admit), namely, a total of 100 persons. Therefore, on the basis of number, which is the most important factor, they cannot be considered as a minority group;

(c) The number of members belonging to an association can in no case be considered as equivalent to the number of persons having a particular nationality;

(d) Albania has comprehensive human rights legislation, which is entirely in keeping with European and international standards;

(e) The Albanian State has demonstrated, on the basis of facts, that it is fully prepared to show strict respect for the human rights of all Albanian citizens, regardless of their nationality. That preparedness has been confirmed in a number of reports drawn up by representatives of international organizations who have visited our country;

(f) The very fact that a register is kept of the associations mentioned in the memorandum, which even have Slavic names (the Rozafa-Moraca association, registered in Tirana, and the "Coexistence and Harmony" and "Zelena Gora" associations, registered in Shkodra), is a sign of the tolerance and the correct attitude of the Albanian State;

(g) The Republic of Albania remains fully committed to respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with national legislation, as well as its international obligations. This is first and foremost a consequence of the nature of the State and of Albania's democratic society.